DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 471 365 EA 032 145

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TITLE	Accountability Using ISLLC Standards in Practicum Experiences.
PUB DATE	2001-11-04
NOTE	10p.; Paper presented at the Southern Region Council on Educational Administration (Jacksonville, FL, November 4, 2001).
PUB TYPE	Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Accountability; Course Content; *Education Courses; Educational Opportunities; Elementary Secondary Education; Higher Education; *Instructional Leadership; *Leadership Training; *Practicums; Standards; Training Methods; *Training Objectives
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ABSTRACT

This paper is a description of the development of a new educational leadership program at Austin Peay State University. From inception to implementation, the program used Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) standards, a tool for assessing programs in educational administrator preparation. The goal of the program was to embed the standards into all aspects of the design, implementation, and evaluation of the program. The paper describes briefly some of the challenges in implementing the program, with an emphasis on one particular issue: how to design accountability strategies consistent with current best practices in education. With all this in mind, Curriculum developers created the following courses for the Leadership Studies program: Leadership and Systems (60 hours); Human Interactions (120 hours); Instructional Leadership (120 hours); Educational Diversity and Ethics (60 hours); Law and Management (60 hours); and Leadership and Systems (180 hours). Along with a practicum, assignments in each course include a portion of an end-of-program leadership project and a portion of a school-improvement plan. Practicum assignments and assessment tools used for each course are presented in a table. As the program develops, the faculty continues to address the design, evaluation, and accountability for the success of the practicum experiences. (WFA)

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Accountability Using ISLLC Standards in Practicum Experiences

Presented to the Southern Region Council on Educational Administration
Jacksonville, Florida

November 4, 2001

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Overview

This paper is intended to extend the discussion of the development of a new educational leadership program using the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) standards from the inception stage into the implementation stage with emphasis on the assessment of practicum experiences in each course. Austin Peay State University's new Educational Leadership Program is now in its first year of implementation. The opportunities and challenges identified in creating a new program for school administrator preparation have now moved to questions of the actual implementation of the program in the instruction and evaluation of the actual courses. The challenges include defining the team teaching instructional model, designing practicum experiences, developing relationships with the supporting school districts to provide the mentoring activities required for meaningful practicum experiences and designing evaluation procedures consistent with best practices as well as providing accountability.

Context

One societal change that is directly affecting education is the growing call for standards throughout the field of education. The initiative driving the new program at Austin Peay is the one undertaken by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) in 1994 when they formed the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC). An outcome of this consortium was the Standards for School Leaders (1996) that is supported by the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NCBEA) comprised of ten educational organizations including the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP), the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP), and the American Association of School Administrators (AASA).

The ISLLC standards are the talking points for educational administrator preparation programs and organizational meetings of administrators across the United States, particularly for the 36 ISLLC member states. Educational Testing Service (ETS) has developed an assessment of potential school leaders, which reflects the knowledges, dispositions, and performances of these standards. Some institutions or programs may desire to set expectations beyond those outlined by ISLLC. For example, some programs may aspire to certification standards that are in

line with an association or peers of exemplary practice similar to national board certification for teachers (Shipman, 2001). Therefore, it is incumbent on preparation programs within the United States to produce graduates who can "pass" this assessment. The approach to the program has been to embed the standards into all the educational leadership courses.

Accountability for educational administration preparation programs can first be judged by the results of the students' scores on the PRAXIS test for school administrators. This first and most basic tool for accountability is one that can be comfortably met by (1) designing the entire program around the same ISLLC Standards that are the basis for the test; (2) including practicum experiences; (3) offering numerous classroom case studies to prepare the student for the real world and for the scenarios on the PRAXIS test.

Other tools for accountability are less obvious and more difficult to design especially if there is a strong commitment to a research-based program. This program is in the process of designing some tools consistent with best practices and offering accountability over the long term.

Brief History

The goal of the new program for leadership studies at Austin Peay was to embed the standards into all aspects of the learning design, implementation and evaluation of the program. The development process began by asking where do we want to go based on the standards. The indicators from knowledges, dispositions and performances were separated and reconstructed into large chunks of common concepts, beliefs and actions. The categories of Leadership, Systems, Communication, Success for All, Law and Environment, and Teaching and Learning emerged. Each standard's indicators fell into at least one of these six categories. They were the initial identifiers for what would later evolve into new courses (Masden, Simms, Fiene 2001).

In addition to course content, the faculty identified three crucial needs: (1) a flowing assessment throughout the program that would promote (2) a seamless delivery of the curriculum in the program and (3) a concentrated focus on the development of school administrators who can successfully lead schools and school districts. Bookend courses, one entrance and one exit, were designed around systems, leadership concepts, planning, knowledge of self as a leader and exhibition of leadership through a planned project. The remaining classes became Human

Interaction, Instructional Leadership, Educational Diversity and Ethics, and Law and Management.

Holistically, the faculty also wanted to configure the delivery of the courses into 5 or 6 semester hour credit courses to be taken in sequence. Each course includes practicum experiences and includes a portion of a program's end of program leadership project. A pilot project, Aspiring Administrators, conducted in 1998-1999 strongly influenced the configuration of the program. Participants indicated in their exit interview that the most valuable aspects of the that program were the mentoring components and the leadership project (Masden, et. al. 2001)

These multi-dimensional courses also benefit from the expertise of several faculty members and practitioners throughout the semester. Decisions were made to embed communications, diversity issues, technology usage, and a seamless course performance assessment into each course. In addition, each course has a predetermined portion of a School Improvement Plan (SIP) that must be developed and included in the end-of-course portfolio. The SIP model used is drawn from the National Study on School Evaluation (Fitzpatrick, 1997) and is consistent with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools' school improvement process. The courses contain the following aspects of school improvement planning: Leadership Studies I: Leadership and Systems develops the individual growth plan and the mission/vision; Leadership Studies II Human Interactions designs a profile of demographics about the school community including the school culture; Leadership Studies III: Instructional Leadership describes the learning environment as it currently exists and identifies results for student learning; Leadership Studies IV: Educational Diversity and Ethics disaggregates student data as a reflection of objective data-driven decision-making; Leadership Studies V: Law and Management analyzes management, technology, and legal issues as they relate to the student's school plan and facilitates goal(s) setting for the project; Leadership Studies VI: Leadership and Systems puts all the aspects of the SIP together and requires the student to implement a change movement at the local school level.

The assessment of each of these SIP components will include the use of the rubrics provided by Fitzpatrick (1997) by both the student for self-assessment and the instructors for

additional feedback. Other assessment tools are in the process of development and include: learning log entries for reflection, school culture surveys, portfolio rubrics, teacher observation and conference feedback forms (largely drawn from state documents), mentor formative evaluations, scoring guides, self-assessment reflections and instruments for specific tasks involving reflection within each course.

Implementation Challenges

As the program is unfolding into practice, the faculty have encountered several challenges. For purposes of this paper, the last challenge identified here will be explored in more depth. The issues embedded in the implementation of the new program now include:

How can we best collaboratively design classroom instruction into 4 to 5 hour blocks?
How can we best work in a team teaching scenario in the classroom?
How can we best design meaningful practicum experiences?
How can we best develop relationships with local school districts to support the mentoring of students?
How can we best design accountability strategies consistent with current best practices in education?

How can we best collaboratively design classroom instruction into 4 to 5 hour blocks?

The faculty has looked for strategies, integration tools, relevant content, and useful case studies to engage learners who most often have spent the day teaching and who come to class from 5:00 pm until 8:30 pm one evening per week. Instructional planning is consistent with the best practices as described by Zemelman, Daniels, and Hyde (1993), constructivist teaching, (Brooks and Brooks, 1993), multiple intelligences (Gardner, 1983) and brain based research (Jensen, 1998). The presentation of concepts is in an integrated, holistic manner deemed a better way to prepare the learner to perform and retain the learning. Continually revisiting instructional design is facilitated by the team of instructors rather than by individuals but is hampered by the lack of a culture in college teaching that supports student engagement.

How can we best work in a team teaching scenario?

"Personal and professional experiences require an interactive professional culture if adults are to engage with one another in the processes of growth and development." (Lambert, et.al.p.28) It is the intent of this new program to create an instructional model in congruence with this quote that will help to develop individuals who will promote similar environments in their

schools. A team-teaching model is one in which most instructors have not had experience. This fact has necessitated a level of collaboration previously unknown. Professors have been faced with how to deliver in a "tag-team" fashion that honors the knowledge and expertise of each instructor and is consistent with each instructor's preferred style of instruction. The commitment to the model has been evident in the willingness to schedule the mutual planning time, engage in the necessary research and share unselfishly to see that the quality of planning is professional and the delivery of instruction exemplary.

How can we best design meaningful practicum experiences?

There has been a commitment on the part of the faculty to provide meaningful field-based experiences to help develop school leaders. These field-based experiences should illuminate the knowledges, dispositions, and performances of the ISLLC Standards. The issues that have challenged our planning have been: a) How can teachers engage in shadowing experiences when responsible for the instruction of students without budgetary resources for substitute teachers? b) How can mentors be identified and accessed if the building principal is not an exemplary leader suitable to act as a mentor? c) How can the university faculty exercise some quality control over the selection of mentors? and d) What specific activities are appropriate for each of our courses?

How can we best develop relationships with local school districts to support the mentoring of students?

A major challenge to providing meaningful experiences is the development of a network of practicing administrators who embody the knowledges, dispositions and performances described in the ISLLC standards. The process of developing this network will be a labor and time intensive process that will require both diplomatic and knowledge base expertise. We have established working relationships with the Directors of Schools (superintendents) in our geographic area, but we have not developed in a systematic way, relationships with supervisors and school principals. Even relationships with Directors of Schools are subject to change based on the average longevity of school superintendents.

How can we best design accountability strategies consistent with current best practices in education?

Assessment is threaded throughout the program. A group of practicing administrators spent two days suggesting performances that would holistically demonstrate the indicators in each course. Their input was invaluable, however few examples are available of the evaluation of an application-based program such as this one based on the relatively new ISLLC standards. Specifically related to the practicum experiences evaluation, there was little in the literature to assist in assessing administrative field-based experiences. The use of such strategies makes common sense but is not supported by sound research results (Daresh, 1987, p. 7).

The model of a portfolio advocated by Brown and Irby (1997) and their emphasis on reflection and self-assessment have been adopted philosophically for the design and implementation of evaluation as a part of leadership studies. Brown and Irby suggest,

> "The reflection inherent in the portfolio development process: (a) provides insights into strengths and weaknesses, (b) encourages planning for professional growth, (c) leads to improved practice by the principal, and (d) ultimately enhances school and teacher effectiveness and improves student learning." (p. 23-24)

Brown and Irby identify the following as commonalities of shared by reflective administrators:

1) View self-assessment and reflection as priorities for school improvement.
2) Recognize that external and internal challenges result in growth.
3) Intentionally engage in activities aimed at challenging and current beliefs and practice and expanding understandings.
4) Understand that change is inevitable.
5) Recognize that chaos is often accompanies change.
6) Share understandings with colleagues. (p. 25-26)

Research is conclusive in showing that self-assessment is necessary for growth (Brown & Irby, p. 24) Given these obvious benefits or correlations with reflection, the program has been designed with reflection built into assignments, assessments, observations, planning tasks and overall evaluation. Students demonstrated their learning more through the creation of products or the publicly demonstrated knowledge than through written exams or papers.

Practicum experiences and assessments

For each course, students must complete a part of the SIP model in preparation for a culminating experience in Leadership Studies VI. Each of these activities is completed as a part of the practicum experience for each course.

Table 1
Practicum experiences and assessments by courses

Course	Practicum assignments	Assessment tools	Total hours
Leadership Studies I: Leadership and Systems	Self-discovery Personal Mission Educational Mission Growth plan	Completion in Portfolio Fitzpatrick (1997) Rubric State Framework for Evaluation	60
Leadership Studies II: Human Interactions	School Profile School culture survey and analysis Interactions with school stakeholders	Fitzpatrick (1997) Rubric Instructor rubric Instructor rubric	120
Leadership Studies III: Instructional Leadership	Analyze the learning environment Classroom Observations and feedback	Fitzpatrick (1997) Rubric State Framework for Evaluation	120
Leadership Studies IV: Educational Diversity and Ethics	Data analysis and decision making process Individualized educational planning	Fitzpatrick (1997) Rubric Instructor rubric	60
Leadership Studies V: Law and Management	Portfolio of technology usage Action plan creation Analyze plan for legal issues	Instructor designed rubric Fitzpatrick (1997) Rubric	60
Leadership Studies VI: Leadership and Systems	Complete written SIP for leadership project Lead a change movement using student's action plan	Fitzpatrick (1997) Rubrics for all sections Assessment strategies identified by the student in the action plan	180

Considerations

This Educational Leadership department has begun the implementation of its new program in the fall, 2001. Educational leaders in the area have been very supportive of the program and especially supportive of the inclusion of extensive practicum experiences. The development of assignments and assessment tools for such practicum experiences supported as effective by research remains limited. Daresh (1987) reported that the research available has generally looked at local issues, was without theoretical base, was confined largely to internships, and did not examine the process longitudinally (p. 12). This continues to be a problem. Each leadership department recognizes the need and value of practicum experiences and for now must individually address the design and evaluation of such experiences and the accountability for the success of such practices.

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